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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 003066

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SUBJECT: USAU: AU, PARTNERS KEEPING PRESSURE ON MAURITANIAN
JUNTA

REF: ADDIS ABABA 3051

Classified By: Ambassador John A. Simon, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Summary: The African Union and its international partners agreed on November 10 in Addis Ababa to issue a communique warning the Mauritanian junta of sanctions and isolation should they fail to respond to the international community's demand for the immediate unconditional liberation of President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, his restoration to office, and a return to constitutional rule that recognizes his role as the legitimately elected head of state. The communique, endorsed by permanent members and African members of the UNSC during a special session following the AU/partners meeting, urges the junta to use the scheduled November 20 consultation between the EU and the junta to demonstrate their commitment to resolving the Mauritanian political crisis in a way that will satisfy the international community. The junta's response on November 20 will be the subject of a ministerial-level meeting of the AU and EU troikas, as well as the other participants of the November 10 meeting, in Addis on November 21. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On November 10, the AU and its international partners (Arab League, UN, Organization of the Islamic Conference, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, and the EU) met in Addis Ababa to discuss the political crisis in Mauritania. Specifically, they reviewed a proposal that a delegation representing the Mauritanian junta had conveyed to AU Chairman Jean Ping during an unannounced visit to Addis on November 4. (Note: Both the AU and the Arab League had sent delegations to Nouakchott in attempts to resolve the crisis. End Note.)

¶3. (U) The junta's proposal, which the AU leadership dismissed as "not serious," (see reftel) called for the "rapid liberation of the former President who will enjoy all the privileges and prerogatives due to a former Head of State." Further, it stated that Abdallahi could, "if he wishes, participate in the General Assemblies on Democracy." The proposal also called for "the holding of national days for consultations known as General Assemblies on Democracy that are open to all the Mauritanian political forces without exclusion concerning participation or taboos on the subjects to be discussed," and it included "the adoption, at the end of these General Assemblies on Democracy, of a road map which will specify: the duration of the transition period; the electoral calendar leading to free and transparent presidential elections; eligibility to contest for these presidential elections; and guarantees of regularity and transparency, including international observation of the elections."

¶4. (U) The joint communique forged on November 10 makes clear

that the proposal is unacceptable. (Note: The official communique will be transmitted as soon as available. End note.) The AU and the international community regard Abdallahi as the President -- not the former President -- of Mauritania. Moreover, as the legitimately elected President, he has a role to play in resolving the crisis in Mauritania. AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra told permanent members and African members of the UNSC who attended a special session immediately following the AU/partners meeting that the major point of contention between the junta's proposal and the AU (and ultimately the international community) was the status of the President. He said the junta proposed allowing Abdallahi to only play a role as a "former" head of state. "He is not a 'former' head of the state," Lamamra asserted. Abdallahi would only be a former head of state if he had stepped down. If such a situation were to occur, "The international community should be satisfied that he has not resigned under pressure, but that he has done so freely to help his country overcome this crisis."

15. (U) An EU representative who participated in the drafting of the communique confirmed that the "bone of contention" between the junta and the international community was the status of the President. "The President must be a major actor in the transition process," he said. The EU also was concerned that the junta was already manipulating the transition process by appointing its henchmen to key positions. Unless President Abdallahi is freed and is allowed to participate in the transition, the EU will consider the new government unconstitutional, he added.

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16. (U) The communique, which the permanent members and the African members of the UNSC had an opportunity to comment on, also contained a warning to the junta that if they failed to respond to the international community's demands, they would face sanctions and isolation. The communique did not explicitly call for the withdrawal of the military from power. The Ambassador delivered his prepared points concerning the need for the President to be restored to office, the military to withdraw from power, and constitutional rule to be restored as bases of any transition process. He asked pointedly whether all agreed the communique was clear on these points. Lamamra assured the meeting that the recognition of Abdallahi as the legitimately elected President and the reference to respect for the Mauritanian constitution means the President should be restored to power and the "withdrawal of the military should take place."

17. (U) Lamamra said the goal of the communique is for the AU and the international community to "speak with one voice" in expressing "our commitment to democratic principles" as well as a willingness to help resolve the crisis in Mauritania. He said the AU and its international partners expected the junta to "fully integrate" this position of the AU and the international community into the response they give at their consultations with the EU scheduled for November 20. The junta's response to the EU on November 20 will be the subject of a meeting of the AU and EU troikas in Addis on November

21. If the junta responds favorably, cooperates, and if its response is acceptable to all Mauritians, the AU and the international community would join in the efforts to resolve the crisis and restore constitutional order in Mauritania, according to the communique. If, on the other hand, the junta does not reply to the EU or if its response confirms that the political dialogue is at an impasse, then the AU and EU troikas will have an opportunity to assess the situation and consider what measures to take.

18. (C) Following the special session, Lamamra gave the Ambassador his assessment of how junta leader Maj. General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz might react to the communique. Lamamra said Aziz may resist the international community's

efforts because he has his own presidential ambitions, but he said the threat of sanctions and isolation may succeed in splintering the junta and thus reducing its grip on power. Lamamra suggested that once the President is restored to power, the military could play a productive role by sitting on a national security committee. But the military should not have a role in the transition, he insisted.

19. (C) Comment: We understand from some of those who participated in the drafting of the communique that the final text had to be softened to reach a consensus. The communique still contains the major points that we and the AU's other international partners consider essential, namely that President Abdallahi be liberated immediately, and that he should be considered the legitimately elected President.
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